

	NIBIN INVESTIGATIONS	Operations Order 8.6.00
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1. **PURPOSE** - To detail the use of the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), to include: the process of collecting and entering cartridge cases (casings) into NIBIN; the manner in which test fired casings are recovered to enter into NIBIN; the evaluation and correlation of casings entered into this system and compared to known casings; the process in which NIBIN information is received and disseminated; and the investigation of leads/associations established through the use of the program.
2. **SCOPE** – NIBIN may be used as a resource when firearms or casings are recovered during the investigation of any crime. Scene casings entered into the database may establish correlations with crime gun casings already in the database. Additionally, “test-fire” casings from known, recovered, or legally obtained firearms can be entered into the database to assess for a NIBIN lead/correlation.
3. **DEFINITIONS**

A. Acquisition	The entry of digital images of various firearm-related markings on cartridge cases into NIBIN
B. Correlation	The automated comparison of an acquired digital image to other images in the databases using an algorithm that provides a list of ranked, possible matches
C. NIBIN Lead	An unconfirmed, <u>potential</u> , association between two or more pieces of firearm ballistic evidence based on a correlation review of the images in the NIBIN database by a firearms examiner or a trained NIBIN technician. A NIBIN Lead is intended to provide a lead for investigative purposes.
D. NIBIN Hit	The result of two or more firearms ballistic acquisitions confirmed as a match by a firearms examiner. • NIBIN hits are based on correlation review of digital images using MatchPoint Plus and microscopic confirmation by a firearms examiner. • This information can be used for investigative purposes and is suitable for court purposes
E. NIBIN Association	See “NIBIN Lead”
F. Preliminary Association	NIBIN leads are preliminary in nature, meaning that an “official” or certified match result can only be obtained by a forensic firearms examiner
G. Test Fire	Cartridge cases fired from a specific firearm in law enforcement custody for the purpose of input into NIBIN.

4. **NIBIN CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS**

- A. Cartridge cases “casings” recovered from the scene of any crime, should be impounded for NIBIN analysis
- B. Recovered firearms used or suspected of having been used during a criminal offense, should be collected and impounded as evidence.
 - (1) All firearms impounded as evidence are automatically routed to CGIU for test firing.
 - (2) The casings acquired from the test fire will be entered into NIBIN for analysis.
 - (3) If there is a need to expedite the NIBIN entry of casings or test fires, contact a Crime Gun Intelligence Unit (CGIU) or NIBIN supervisor.
 - (4) Details regarding prioritization and processing of evidence can be found in the Violent Crimes Bureau (VCB) Manual.
- C. When a preliminary correlation is obtained from NIBIN analysis, the information will be used to create a NIBIN Lead.

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4. C. (1) The lead will be forwarded to CGIU supervisors by bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) personnel or ATF contractors.
 - (a) ATF personnel may also send the lead information to investigators assigned to the related case/s.
 - (2) The lead will be assigned a number (i.e. NIBIN Lead 2000-1234) and include a list of all cases associated with it.
 - (a) These may be Phoenix cases or From Other Jurisdictions (FOJ).
 - (3) CGIU personnel will evaluate and disseminate leads to the assigned case agent.
 - (a) CGIU personnel will open a new Case Management in RMS, link any associated incidents, and document the NIBIN lead in the specified Case Management field.
 - (b) The NIBIN Lead will also be assigned to a CGIU case agent at this time.
 - (c) All case agents will be notified of the NIBIN Lead via email.
 - (4) Prior to pursuing any NIBIN lead, investigators will contact the assigned CGIU case agent, Sergeant, or Lieutenant to verify the status of the NIBIN lead, related cases and the investigative response.
 - (a) This will be done before any investigative action is taken.
 - (5) NIBIN leads DO NOT establish probable cause, nor necessarily identify a suspect; additional information will be needed to establish probable cause for an arrest.
 - (6) Please refer to the VCB manual for additional information regarding NIBIN Leads.
5. **NIBIN ENTRIES**
- A. NIBIN entries will only be completed by individuals with NIBIN Acquisition Certification.
 - B. For further information regarding NIBIN acquisition training/certification refer to the VCB bureau manual.
6. **NIBIN CORRELATIONS**
- A. NIBIN correlations are conducted to identify the characteristics necessary for comparison.
 - B. NIBIN correlations will only be completed by NIBIN Correlation certified individuals.
 - (1) This process will be peer-reviewed by a second NIBIN correlation certified individual.
 - (2) When two NIBIN certified personnel are in agreement, the item will be declared a preliminary association.
 - (3) An official, definitive match **MUST** be conducted by a forensic firearms examiner/s from the Laboratory Services Bureau (LSB) by request from the Case Agent.
 - (4) Refer to [Operations Orders 5.8.00, Evidence, Impound, and Property \(Section 5.O.\(2\).\(c\)\)](#) for additional information regarding certified firearms examinations.

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6. C. A “correlation center” is staffed by ATF personnel and may also be consulted to identify preliminary NIBIN correlations upon request.
- D. For further information regarding NIBIN correlation training/certification refer to the VCB bureau manual.

7. **DOCUMENTING NIBIN LEADS**

- A. When determining the documentation of a NIBIN lead within an IR, Investigators should take special consideration of any related or additional case/s attached to the lead.
- B. Investigators should evaluate the need to document a NIBIN lead within an IR.
- C. NIBIN Leads are intended for **investigative purposes only** and should not be used as the sole basis for investigative decisions.
 - (1) NIBIN Leads do not represent a definitive confirmation of a “match” or “non-match” (see 6.B.(3) above).
 - (2) Probable Cause to arrest a subject must be established before a lawful arrest.
 - (3) The establishment of probable cause for an arrest or charge is the responsibility of the investigator and/or investigating law enforcement agency if the information is disseminated outside of the Department.

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